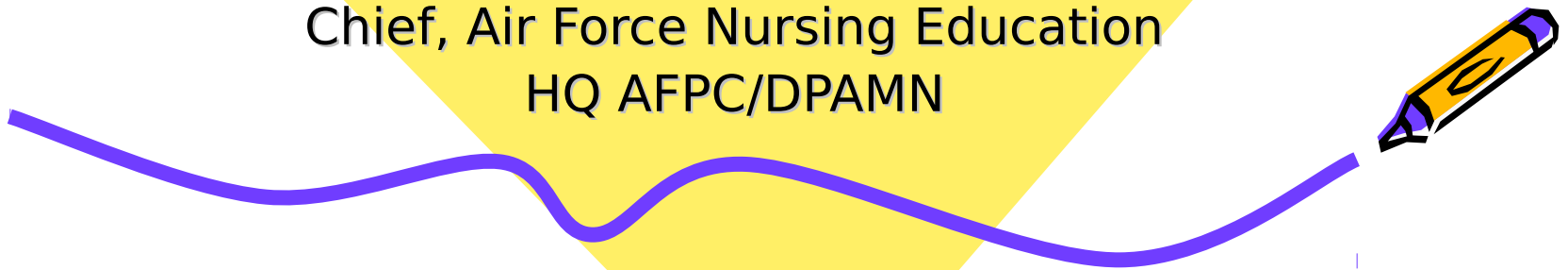




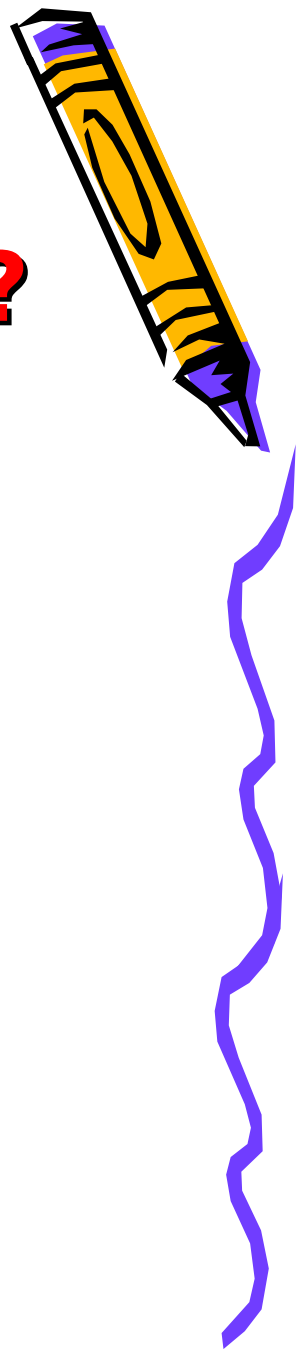
# Writing Objectives

Sandra L. Bruce, Lt Col, USAF, NC  
Chief, Air Force Nursing Education  
HQ AFPC/DPAMN

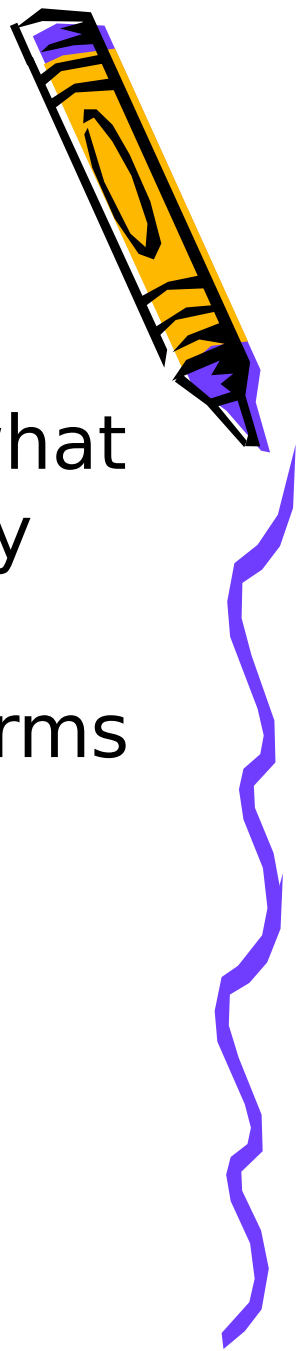


**Do I really need objectives?**

**YES!**



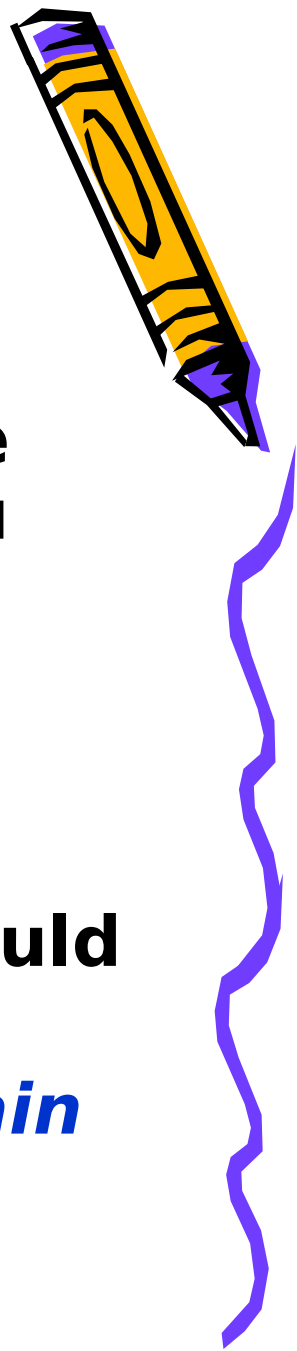
# Why do we need objectives?



- Provides a framework for choosing what to teach and helps the instructor stay within the scope of the program
- Serve as a basis for evaluation, in terms of learner outcomes and instruction
- Enhances communication between adult learners and adult instructors



# **What is the difference between a goal and objective?**



- **Goals describe in broad terms the knowledge, skills or attitudes you want the learner to attain**
- **It is the end product you want to achieve**
- **A goal is not directly measurable**
- **An example of a program goal would be**

***“to understand the process of pain management”***



# How and where do I start?



- Results of a needs assessment should answer:
  - *“What is the goal or goals of the activity?”*
  - *“Why do we need this content?”*
  - *“How much does the target audience know about the topic?”*
  - *“At what point do I start and conclude?”*



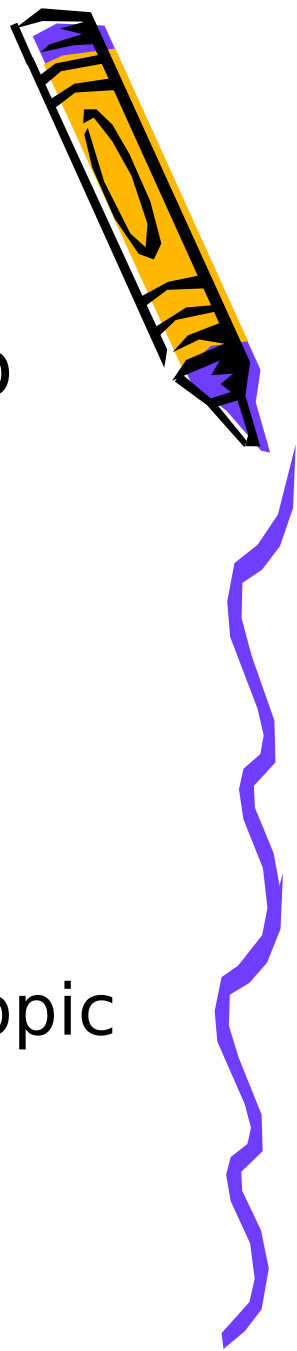
# How and where do I start?



- Define specifically what the learner needs to be able to do after the program
- Ask yourself...bottom line...what change in the learner is absolutely necessary to meet the identified need?
- Make a list



# How many objectives do I need?



- Should train to requirements or to identified needs
- Scrub the list of “nice to knows” versus “must knows”
- Factors impacting the number
  - Who is going to teach the program
  - What the learners know about the topic



# How many objectives do I need?



- Factors impacting the number (Cont.)
  - The physical facilities and resources
  - Time allotted
    - “What can be taught in the anticipated time frame”?
- Typically see three to six objectives depending on the length of the program





# How detailed does an objective need to be?



- Written in general enough terms to describe the expected behaviors that will demonstrate achievement of the program outcomes
- It should reflect the performance domain; for example, demonstrate a skill or acquisition of new knowledge
- Focus on general behaviors, avoid trivial steps

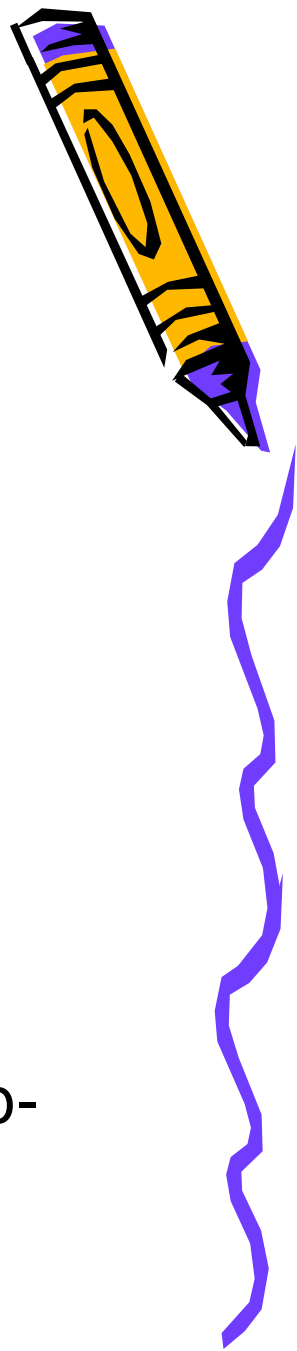


# Should objectives be broadly stated or narrowly focused?

- Broadly stated objectives are used for new information, concepts, or theories
  - Often called general or terminal learning objectives
  - State only the behavior and knowledge to be achieved
  - Conditions and evaluation strategies are not written into the objective, allows for flexibility in the teaching/learning process



# Should objectives be broadly stated or narrowly focused?

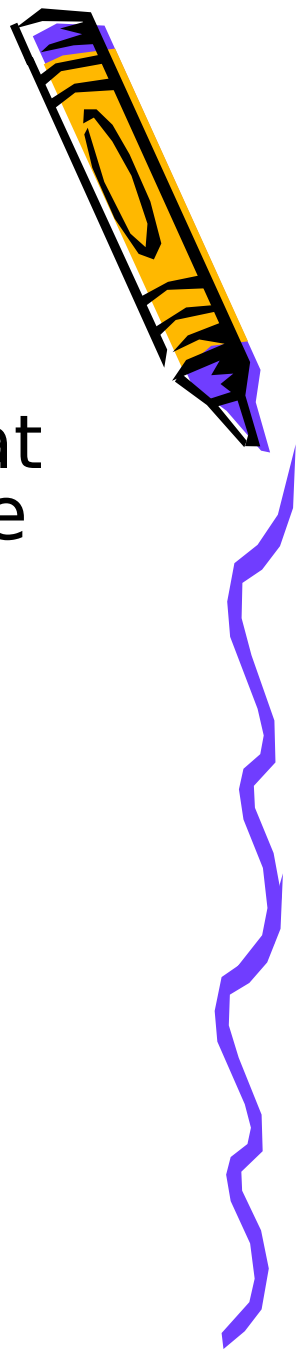


- Narrowly focused objectives are also called sub-objectives or enabling objectives
  - Sub-tasks to achieve an overall skill set
  - close-ended and include all the contingencies of the learning situation
  - describe actions needed to accomplish the broadly stated or terminal learning objectives
  - For learning activities that require a step-by-step presentation



# **Why does an objective need to be measurable?**

- An objective is a word picture of what we expect learners to do if they have learned the material
- Cues the learner to focus on what is important in the program activity
- It provides a standard to ascertain if achievement of intended outcomes has occurred
- If your evaluation is subjective then you don't truly have an objective!



# How do I make an objective measurable?

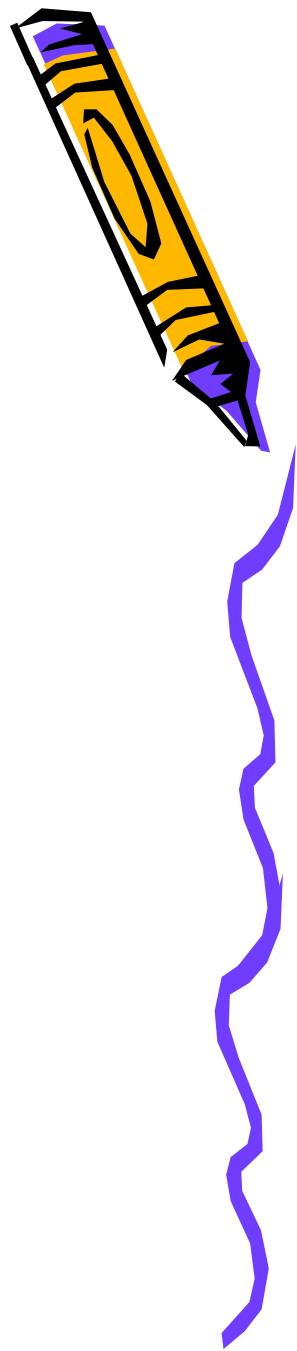


- Always use an **“action”** verb
- The most common mistake is using verbs that indicate cognitive actions
- This is fine for a goal statement, NOT for an objective
- Verbs such as “understand, appreciate, know” are not directly measurable
- Use behavioral, observable terms such as “state, explain, demonstrate”



**What do I need to develop  
first, content or objectives?**

**OBJECTIVES!**



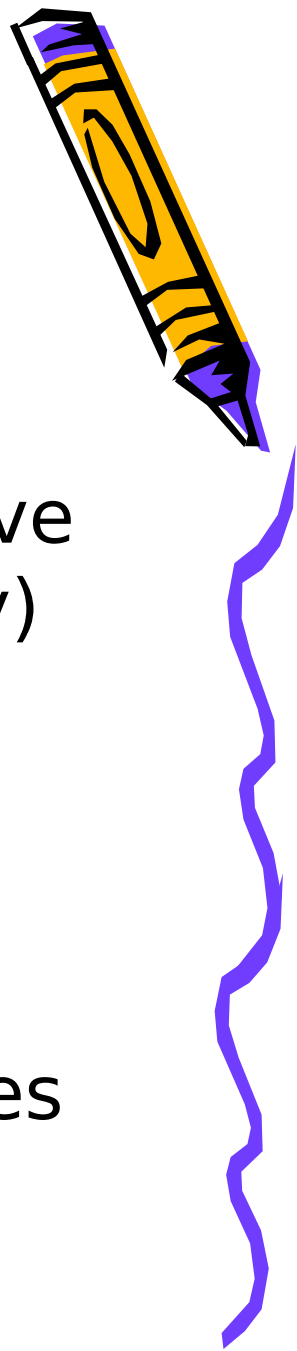
# What do I need to develop first, content or objectives?

- If you develop content first, then you are faced with developing objectives to fit the material
- Objectives should be designed to meet the needs of the learner
- Objectives serve as a guide for developing and organizing the content
- Objectives should be arranged from the known and progress to the unknown



# How do I keep objectives “learner focused”?

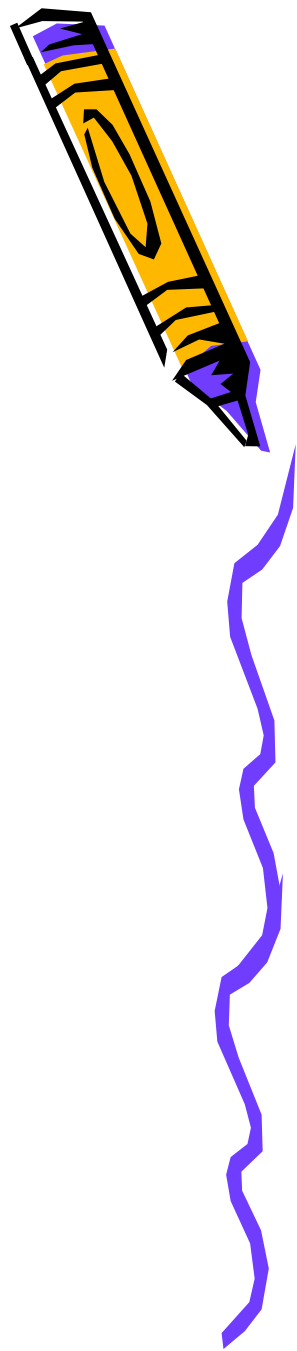
- The **key** is to identify the **target audience** in the body of the objective (e.g. nurse, physician, unit secretary)
- This helps you describe, “what the learner will do” **NOT** what the “instructor will do”
- Always describe in terms of learner outcomes **NOT** educational processes





**What are the essential  
components of a good  
objective?**

|| ABCD ||



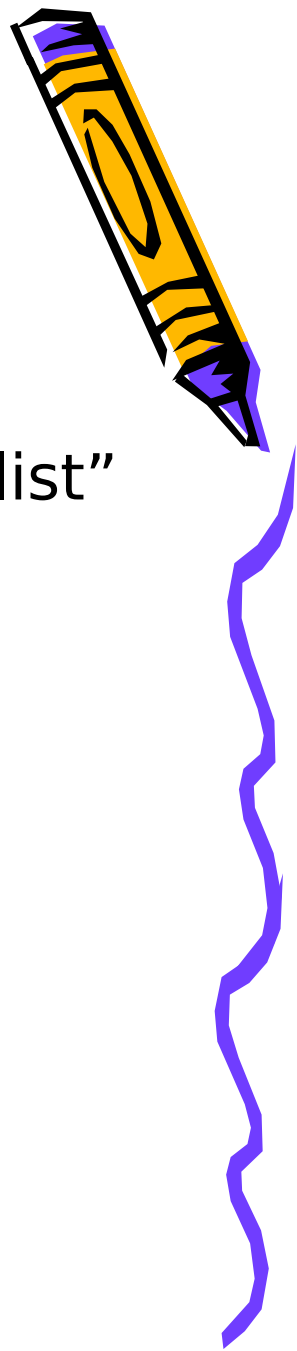
# What are the essential components of a good objective?



- “**A**” is for ***audience*** and identifies the learner as  
the focus of the objective
- “**B**” is ***behavior*** or actions that indicate that learning has occurred
- “**C**” is for ***condition***, and describes the condition(s) or circumstance(s) under which the learner is expected to perform and be evaluated
- “**D**” is the ***degree of attainment***, or standard, and  
describes how well or to what degree you expect the learner to perform



# What are the essential components of a good objective?



“Using the human patient simulator, trauma team members will perform a trauma assessment IAW with a performance checklist”

**Who is the Audience?**

*“Trauma team members”*

**What is the Behavior?**

*“perform a trauma assessment”*

**What is the Condition?**

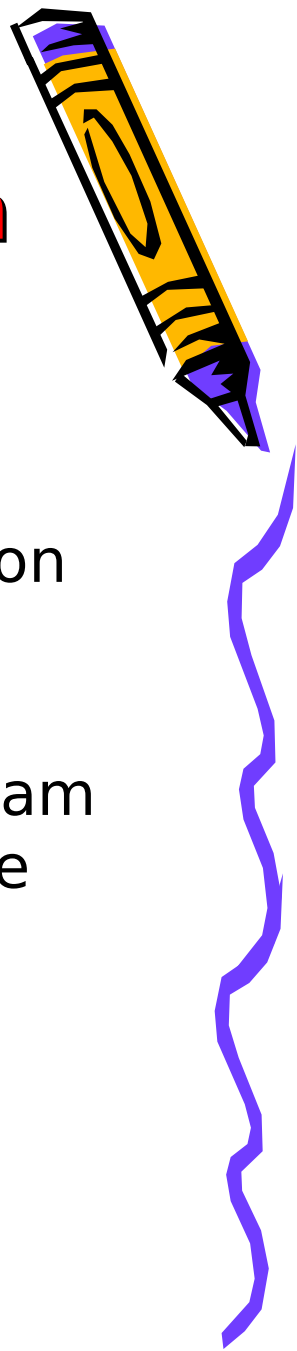
*“using a human patient simulator”*

**What is the Degree of attainment?**

*“in accordance with a performance checklist”*



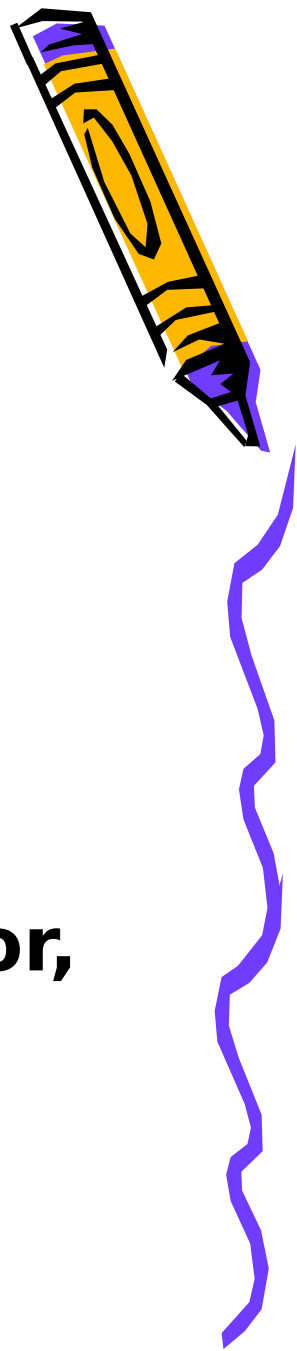
# Why should I include the condition(s) of performance in an objective?



- The ***condition*** is an optional feature
- When the learner needs specific information on what will be provided or denied them during evaluation of performance
- Conditions are often included when the program is designed to test specific skills or knowledge



# Why should I include the condition(s) of performance in an objective?

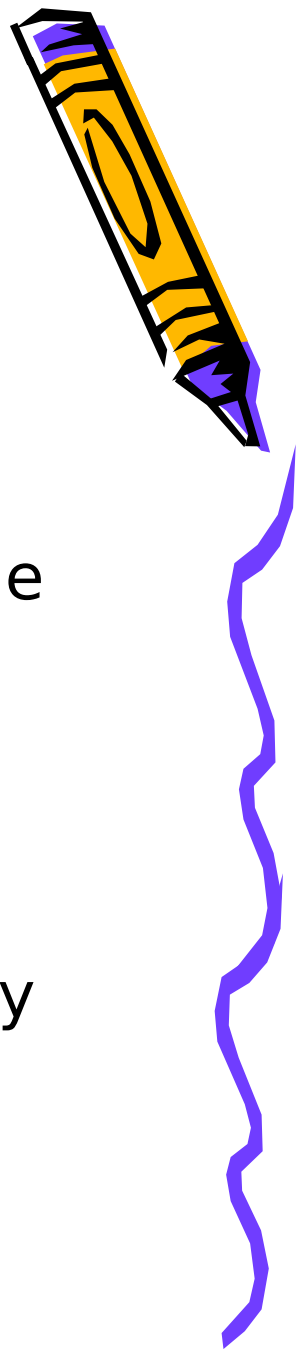


Examples:

- “**Using the human patient simulator**, perform endotracheal suctioning, in accordance with the performance checklist.”
- “**Without the use of a calculator**, determine the drip rate for....”



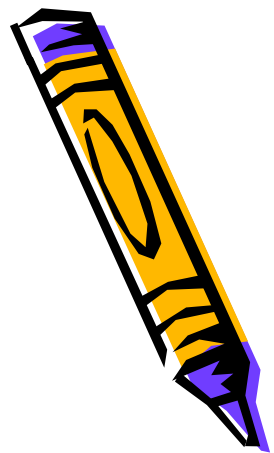
# **How do I choose the right “behavioral” verbs to describe my desired outcomes?**



- Adults are action oriented and, although measurable, verbs such as list, state, define all reflect the lowest levels of information learning
- Adults appreciate actions that relate most closely to their job performance
- Consider how the learner will use what they learn from the program



# How do I choose the right “behavioral” verbs to describe my desired outcomes?



- Ask yourself “**What domain of learning is my intended outcome?**”
- The three domains of learning are:

**Cognitive Psychomotor Affective**

- Then ask “at what level do I want the learners to achieve the objective?”



# How do I choose the right “behavioral” verbs to describe my desired outcomes?

- Sample verb lists are available for each domain
  - These help you select, or guide you to the appropriate verb within each domain
  - When you choose the verb, also ask, “Is this something I can measure, given the time and resources available?”





# **Why is it a good idea to include the “degree of attainment” within the body of an objective?**



- Defines the standard of performance
- It can be expressed in many ways
  - In terms of time frames (i.e. within 30 min.)
  - Accuracy (i.e. 80% accuracy or zero discrepancy)
  - In accordance with specific guidelines (i.e. hospital policy or another authority)
  - Or quantity (i.e. perform 3 venipunctures)



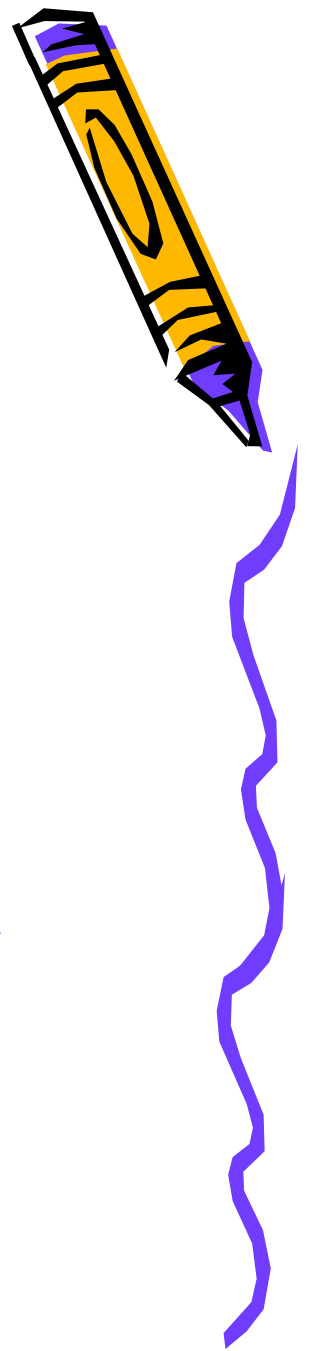
# **Why is it a good idea to include the “degree of attainment” within the body of an objective?**



- If a degree of attainment is not specified, then it is assumed at 100% accuracy
- Although optional, including this component in the body of the objective establishes the expectation that the learner will be evaluated accordingly
- It is acceptable to add the degree of attainment in a separate sentence



# **What is the difference between a simple objective and a complex objective?**

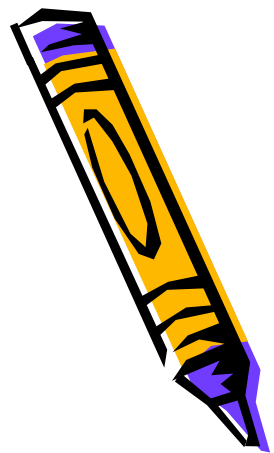


- A simple objective includes only the audience (“A”) and the behavioral statement (“B”)

*Depending on the goal of your program this may suffice*



# What is the difference between a simple objective and a complex objective?

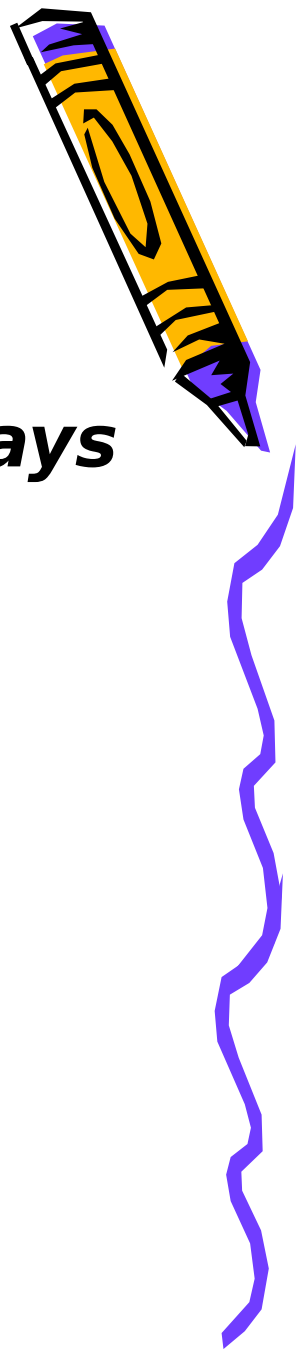


- A complex objective includes the “ABCD”: the audience, a behavioral statement, a condition statement, and the degree of attainment

*If it is important to measure specific aspects of the performance, then a complex objective will be helpful*



# How do I choose the right domain of learning to reflect my desired outcomes?



***The cognitive domain*** reflects on “***ways of knowing***”.

- This domain relies on facts, data and theory, and is most frequently used when information is to be delivered
- Traditional lectures, discussions, and written tests are usually the result of cognitive objectives



# How do I choose the right domain of learning to reflect my desired outcomes?



***The affective domain*** reflects on “***ways of feeling***”

- This domain commonly addresses more abstract concepts that relate to “values,” “attitudes” and “feelings”
- Programs in this domain are characterized by exploration of values and emotions and often encourage self-examination of feelings



# How do I choose the right domain of learning to reflect my desired outcomes?



***The psychomotor domain*** reflects on “***ways of doing***”

- Programs based in the psychomotor domain generally provide step-by-step instruction to learn a new basic to advanced skill or procedure
- You may have objectives in two or all three domains depending on the scope and depth of your activity



# What strategy can I use to increase the level of objectives?



- A common mistake is to write **all** objectives at the lowest level
- Write objectives at the appropriate level for the expected outcome
- The goal is to provide educational activities that help the learner achieve a specific level of the domain





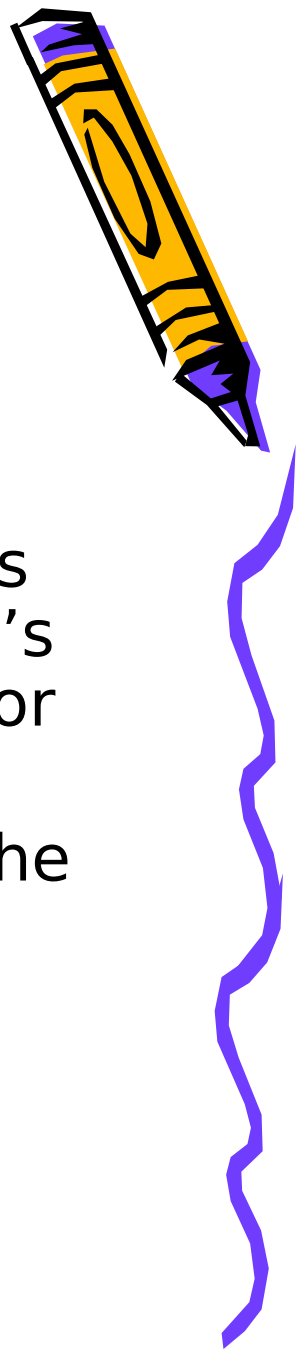
# **increase the level of objectives?**



- Ask yourself
  - How will the information and skills be used in the learner's practice setting?
  - What level of learning will optimize the learner's ability to transfer the learning to their workplace situations?
- The domains of learning are written in increasing levels of complexity



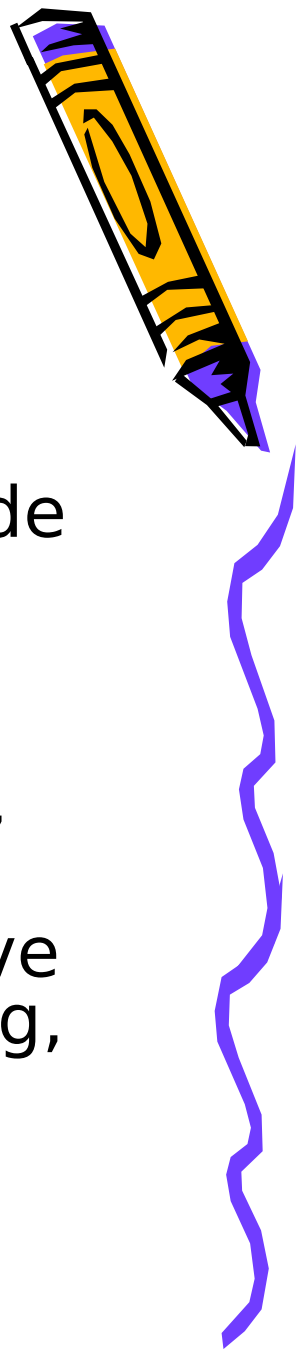
# **increase the level of objectives?**



- Domains are organized in a classification framework to act as a reference guide for developing your objectives
- Evaluation during and after your program is needed to determine if the objective and it's associated level of learning is reasonable for that target audience
- Also keep in mind that the more complex the level of learning, you must allow for a corresponding increase in learning time



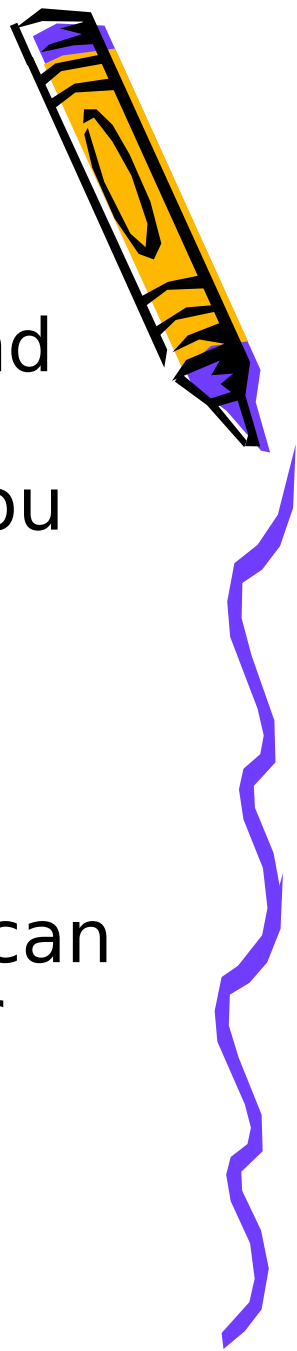
# objectives in the cognitive domain?



- Think of cognitive activities as “mental skills”
- Decide which mental activity will provide a reliable indicator that the learner has attained the knowledge presented
- Learning within the cognitive domain includes an understanding of concepts, principles, theories
- Higher levels of intellectual skills revolve around critical thinking, problem solving, decision-making and evaluation



# How do I develop objectives in the cognitive domain?



- Use the classification framework found in the cognitive domain, choose your verb based on the level of learning you expect the learners to achieve
- Think about how you can evaluate attainment of the objective
- Once you develop your objective and identify how to evaluate it, then you can build your content to help the learner achieve the objective.



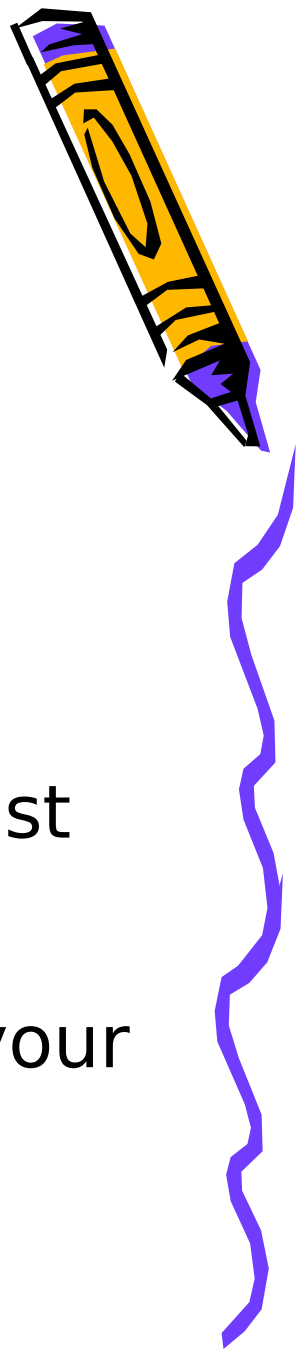
# How do I develop objectives in the psychomotor domain?



- Think of psychomotor activities as “manual or physical skills”
- Decide what verbs are best to describe how well the learner can perform the skill, task, or procedure
- The classification framework found in the psychomotor domain provides guidewords to help you develop your objective



# How do I develop objectives in the psychomotor domain?



- You may find it easier to develop a terminal learning objective first that describes the skill in its entirety
- Then, as you identify the sub-skills or tasks that need to be accomplished successively you are also building a list of teaching points for your content
- Again, consider how you are going to evaluate performance as you select your verbs and develop your objective(s).



# How do I develop objectives in the affective domain?



- Think of affective objectives as actions that demonstrate attitude
- Affective skills reflect moral reasoning and the development of a value system that guides ethical and moral decision-making
- Indirect measures of values are “value indicators” which include moral reasoning, attitudes, and ethics



# How do I develop objectives in the affective domain?



- Refer to the classification framework found in the affective domain
- These guidewords can help you build your objective(s) and also help you to determine the most effective way to involve the learners in activities to master the objective.





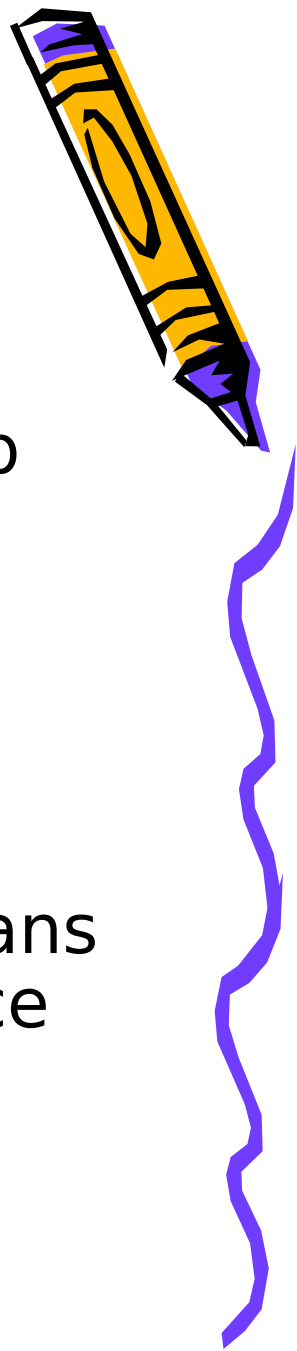
# How can I determine if an objective is met?



- If you include the “ABCD” components in your objectives you will have an excellent guide for evaluation
- For the intended audience you will have described
  - the expected performance or behavior
  - what will be provided or restricted in the performance
  - how well the learner is to perform



# How can I determine if an objective is met?



- Remember to choose the method of evaluation at the same time you develop your objective(s)
- The action verb indicates how you will evaluate the program
- If you use verbs such as “perform, demonstrate, and construct” then your evaluation method should provide a means for the learner to do so i.e. a performance checklist



# How can I determine if an objective is met?



- If your verbs indicate a cognitive skill, such as “define, describe, etc” then a written test or verbal method (i.e. discussion, games, etc) can be used
- Most continuing education programs focus on process objectives, with typical verbs such as, explore, discuss, etc
  - In this case the program evaluation that rates attainment of the objectives, is appropriate for adult learners



# How do I use objectives to develop tests and performance measures?

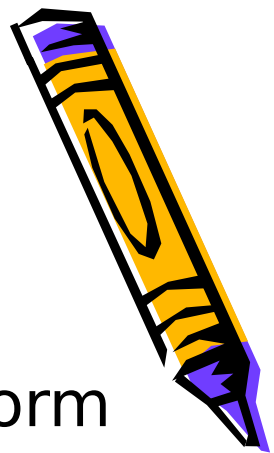


- For psychomotor objectives, a checklist helps to objectively rate the performance
- For cognitive objectives written testing or other evaluation measures such as games, discussion, or role-playing
  - For written test items, match the appropriate item to the behavior stated in the objective
  - The most common error is a mismatch between the action verb and the method of evaluation



# How do I use objectives to develop tests and performance measures?

- For example, an objective states “perform an eye exam” and the method of evaluation is a written test
  - *The error is that IAW the objective, the learner should actually perform the exam*
- If you have written sub objectives that provide cognitive content, then, you can use a test item
- Conversely, you may infer that the learner has attained the knowledge content if he/she performs the action accurately



# How can I use objectives to market the program?

- Consider it a contract with the consumer
- Use objectives to define the intent
- Give enough detail in the marketing brochures to allow learners to decide if the program meets their needs
- The objectives should describe the benefits and outcomes of the program and the level of learning expected
- Consider “truth in advertising”



# What are some common errors in objective writing?

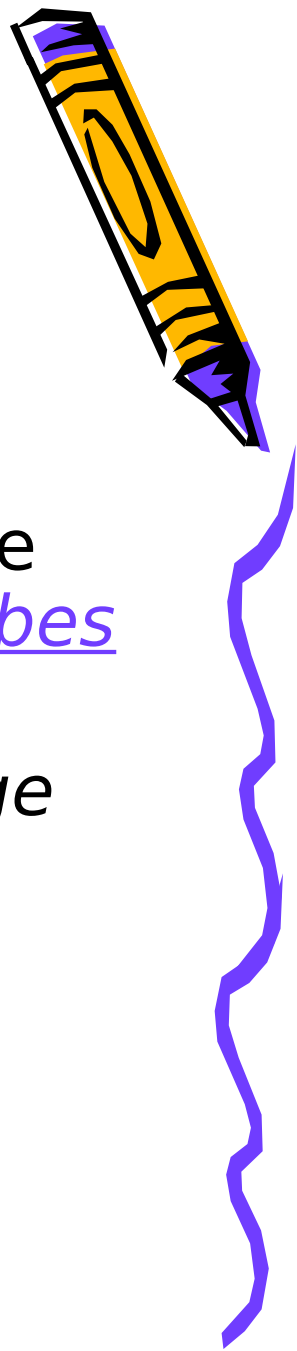


- Objectives that describe a “false condition”
  - for example: *“Given that the nurse has completed the skills performance checklist.”*
  - This does not describe what the learner will be provided, denied, or the environment in which performance is evaluated



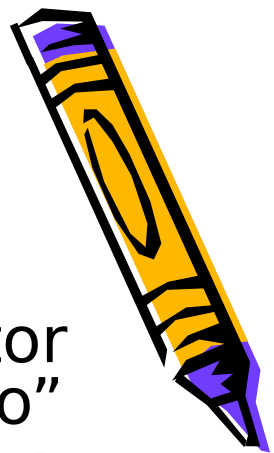
# errors in objective writing?

- Objectives that contain more than one outcome, performance, or behavior
- The learner may attain one performance but not the other, for example: *“describes and develops a discharge plan.”*
- If you change it to *“develops a discharge plan”* you can infer that cognitive knowledge is subsumed within the learner’s performance





# What are some common errors in objective writing?



- Objectives that focus on “what the instructor will do,” instead of “what the learner will do”  
*“The instructor will help the student recognize the consequences of behavior,”* a better way to describe the outcome is *“the student will identify the consequences of behavior.”*
- Objectives that are not non-measurable  
*“have a thorough understanding of blood glucose monitoring.”*
- This could be improved by inserting an action verb that is observable and measurable  
*“perform blood glucose measurement on an actual patient”*



# errors in objective writing?



- Objectives that include “false standard of degree of attainment”

*“must achieve 80 percent on a multiple choice test.”*

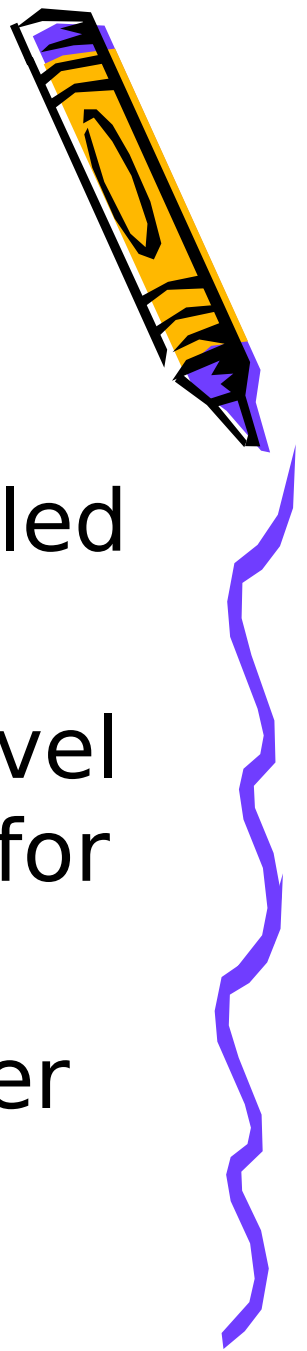
- You can convert this into a realistic standard

*“ performs {a specific action} with 80% accuracy”*

- Objectives that are too specific and actually specifies the evaluation method, for example,
- “Learner will select from a list of variables”* this is better described as *“identify key variables”*



# What other issues should I be aware of?



- Listing objectives without corresponding content, often called orphan objectives
- Using objectives that reflect a level of learning that is inappropriate for the target audience
- Listing objectives in random order



# What other issues should I be aware of?



- Using test items that do not relate to the objectives can occur:
  - during a revision of an established program
  - when mixing and matching objectives and content from multiple programs
  - when developing content or test measures without using objectives as the blueprint or guide



# Questions?

